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## UNITED STATES: President

League of Nations; report on the plan for the League of Nations made by the President on behalf of the Commission constituted by the preliminary Peace Conference at Versailles, also the address of the President.

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Paris Peace Conf., 1919

# THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

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## REPORT ON THE PLAN FOR THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

MADE BY THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

ON BEHALF OF THE COMMISSION CONSTITUTED BY THE  
PRELIMINARY PEACE CONFERENCE IN SESSION AT  
VERSAILLES, FRANCE, ALSO THE ADDRESS OF  
THE PRESIDENT IN RELATION THERETO



PRESENTED BY MR. LODGE

FEBRUARY 15, 1919.—Ordered to be printed

WASHINGTON  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
1919

1919

# THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

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## COVENANT—PREAMBLE.

In order to promote international cooperation and to secure international peace and security by the acceptance of obligations not to resort to war, by the prescription of open, just, and honorable relations between nations, by the firm establishment of the understandings of international law as the actual rule of conduct among Governments, and by the maintenance of justice and a scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations in the dealings of organized people with one another, the powers signatory to this covenant adopt this constitution of the league of nations.

### ARTICLE 1.

The action of the high contracting parties under the terms of this covenant shall be effected through the instrumentality of meeting of a body of delegates representing the high contracting parties, of meeting at more frequent intervals of an executive council, and of a permanent international secretariat to be established at the seat of the league.

### ARTICLE 2.

Meetings of the body of delegates shall be held at stated intervals and from time to time as occasion may require for the purpose of dealing with matters within the sphere of action of the league. Meetings of the body of delegates shall be held at the seat of the league or at such other place as may be found convenient, and shall consist of representatives of the high contracting parties. Each of the high contracting parties shall have one vote but may not have more than three representatives.

### ARTICLE 3.

The executive council shall consist of representatives of the United States of America, the British Empire, France, Italy, and Japan, together with representatives of four other States, members of the league. The selection of these four States shall be made by the body of delegates on such principles and in such manner as they think fit. Pending the appointment of these representatives of the



other States, representatives of ——— shall be members of the executive council.

Meetings of the council shall be held from time to time as occasion may require, and at least once a year, at whatever place may be decided upon, or, failing any such decision, at the seat of the league, and any matter within the sphere of action of the league or affecting the peace of the world may be dealt with at such meetings.

Invitations shall be sent to any power to attend a meeting of the council at which matters directly affecting its interests are to be discussed, and no decision taken at any meeting will be binding on such powers unless so invited.

#### ARTICLE 4.

All matter of procedure at meetings of the body of delegates or the executive council, including the appointment of the committees to investigate particular matters, shall be regulated by the body of delegates or the executive council, and may be decided by a majority of the States represented at the meeting.

The first meeting of the body of delegates and of the executive council shall be summoned by the President of the United States of America.

#### ARTICLE 5.

The permanent secretariat of the league shall be established at —, which shall constitute the seat of the league. The secretariat shall comprise such secretaries and staff as may be required, under the general direction and control of a secretary general of the league, who shall be chosen by the executive council; the secretariat shall be appointed by the secretary general, subject to confirmation by the executive council.

The secretary general shall act in that capacity at all meetings of the body of delegates or of the executive council.

The expenses of the secretariat shall be borne by the States members of the league in accordance with appointment of the expenses of the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union.

#### ARTICLE 6.

Representatives of the high contracting parties and officials of the league when engaged on the business of the league shall enjoy diplomatic privileges and immunities, and the buildings occupied by the league or its officials or by representatives attending its meetings shall enjoy the benefits of extraterritoriality.

#### ARTICLE 7.

Admission to the league of States not signatories to the covenant and not named in the protocol hereto as States to be invited to adhere to the covenant requires the assent of the not less than two-thirds of the States represented in the body of delegates, and shall be limited to fully self-governing countries, including dominions and colonies.

No State shall be admitted to the league unless it is able to give effective guaranties of its sincere intention to observe its international obligations, and unless it shall conform to such principles as may be prescribed by the league in regard to its naval and military forces and armaments.

#### ARTICLE 8.

The high contracting parties recognize the principle that the maintenance of peace will require the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations, having special regard to the geographical situation and circumstances of each State; and the executive council shall formulate plans for effecting such reduction. The executive council shall also determine for the consideration and action of the several Governments what military equipment and armament is fair and reasonable in proportion to the scale of forces laid down in the program of disarmament, and these limits, when adopted, shall not be exceeded without the permission of the executive council.

The high contracting parties agree that the manufacture by private enterprise of munitions and implements of war lends itself to grave objections, and direct the executive council to advise how the evil effects attendant upon such manufacture can be prevented, due regard being had to the necessities of these countries which are not able to manufacture for themselves the munitions and implements of war necessary for their safety.

The high contracting parties undertake in no way to conceal from each other the condition of such of their industries as are capable of being adapted to warlike purposes or the scale of their armaments, and agree that there shall be full and frank interchange of information as to their military and naval programs.

#### ARTICLE 9.

A permanent commission shall be constituted to advise the league on the execution of the provisions of article 8 and on military and naval questions generally.

#### ARTICLE 10.

The high contracting parties undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all States members of the league. In case of any such aggression, or in case of any threat or danger of such aggression, the executive council shall advise upon the means by which the obligation shall be fulfilled.

#### ARTICLE 11.

Any war or threat of war, whether immediately affecting any of the high contracting parties or not, is hereby declared a matter of concern to the league, and the high contracting parties reserve the right to take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations.

It is hereby also declared and agreed to be the friendly right of each of the high contracting parties to draw the attention of the body of delegates or of the executive council to any circumstances affecting international intercourse which threaten to disturb international peace or the good understanding between nations upon which peace depends.

#### ARTICLE 12.

The high contracting parties agree that should disputes arise between them which can not be adjusted by the ordinary processes of diplomacy they will in no case resort to war without previously submitting the question and matters involved either to arbitration or to inquiry by the executive council and until three months after the award by the arbitrators or a recommendation by the executive council; and that they will not even then resort to war as against a member of the league which complies with the award of the arbitrators or the recommendation of the executive council.

In any case under this article, the award of the arbitrators shall be made within a reasonable time, and the recommendation of the executive council shall be made within six months after the submission of the dispute.

#### ARTICLE 13.

The high contracting parties agree that whenever any dispute or difficulty shall arise between them which they recognize to be suitable for submission to arbitration and which can not be satisfactorily settled by diplomacy, they will submit the whole matter to arbitration. For this purpose the court of arbitration to which the case is referred shall be the court agreed upon by the parties or stipulated in any convention existing between them. The high contracting parties agree that they will carry out in full good faith any award that may be rendered. In the event of any failure to carry out the award, the executive council shall propose what steps can best be taken to give effect thereto.

#### ARTICLE 14.

The executive council shall formulate plans for the establishment of a permanent court of international justice, and this court shall, when established, be competent to hear and determine any matter which the parties recognize as suitable for submission to it for arbitration under the foregoing article.

#### ARTICLE 15.

If there should arise between States, members of the league, any dispute likely to lead to rupture, which is not submitted to arbitration as above, the high contracting parties agree that they will refer the matter to the executive council; either party to the dispute may give notice of the existence of the dispute to the secretary-general, who will make all necessary arrangements for a full investigation and consideration thereof. For this purpose the parties agree to com-

municate to the secretary-general, as promptly as possible, statements of their case with all the relevant facts and papers, and the executive council may forthwith direct the publication thereof.

Where the efforts of the council lead to the settlement of the dispute, a statement shall be published indicating the nature of the dispute and the terms of settlement, together with such explanations as may be appropriate. If the dispute has not been settled, a report by the council shall be published, setting forth with all necessary facts and explanations the recommendation which the council thinks just and proper for the settlement of the dispute. If the report is unanimously agreed to by the members of the council other than the parties to the dispute, the high contracting parties agree that they will not go to war with any party which complies with the recommendations, and that if any party shall refuse so to comply the council shall propose measures necessary to give effect to the reason. If no such unanimous report can be made, it shall be the duty of the majority and the privilege of the minority to issue statements indicating what they believe to be the facts and containing the reasons which they consider to be just and proper.

The executive council may in any case under this article refer the dispute to the body of delegates. The dispute shall be so referred at the request of either party to the dispute, provided that such request must be made within 14 days after the submission of the dispute. In any case referred to the body of delegates all the provisions of this article and of article 12 relating to the action of the executive council shall apply to the action and powers of the body of delegates.

#### ARTICLE 16.

Should any of the high contracting parties break or disregard its covenants under article 12 it shall thereby ipso facto be deemed to have committed an act of war against all the other members of the league, which hereby undertake immediately to subject it to the severance of all trade or financial relations, the prohibition of all intercourse between their nationals and the nationals of the covenant-breaking State, and the prevention of all financial, commercial, or personal intercourse between the nationals of the covenant-breaking State and the nationals of any other State, whether a member of the league or not.

It shall be the duty of the executive council in such cases to recommend what effective military or naval forces the members of the league shall severally contribute to the armed forces to be used to protect the covenants of the league.

The high contracting parties agree further that they will mutually support one another in the financial and economic measures which may be taken under this article, in order to minimize the loss and inconvenience resulting from the above measures, and that they will mutually support one another in resisting any special measures aimed at one of their number by the covenant-breaking State, and that they will afford passage through their territory to the forces of any of the high contracting parties who are cooperating to protect the covenants of the league.

## ARTICLE 17.

In the event of disputes between one State member of the league and another State which is not a member of the league, or between States not members of the league, the high contracting parties agree that the State or States not members of the league shall be invited to accept the obligations of membership in the league for the purposes of such dispute, upon such conditions as the executive council may deem just, and upon acceptance of any such invitation the above provisions shall be applied with such modifications as may be deemed necessary by the league.

Upon such invitation being given the executive council shall immediately institute an inquiry into the circumstances and merits of the dispute and recommend such action as may seem best and most effectual in the circumstances.

In the event of a power so invited refusing to accept the obligations of membership in the league for the purposes of such dispute, and taking any action against a State member of the league which in the case of a State member of the league would constitute a breach of article 12, the provisions of article 16 shall be applicable as against the State taking such action.

If both parties to the dispute, when so invited, refuse to accept the obligations of membership in the league for the purposes of such dispute, the executive council may take such action and make such recommendations as will prevent hostilities and will result in the settlement of the dispute.

## ARTICLE 18.

The high contracting parties agree that the league shall be intrusted with general supervision of the trade in arms and ammunition with the countries in which the control of this traffic is necessary and in the common interest.

## ARTICLE 19.

To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them, and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in the constitution of the league.

The best method of giving practical effect of this principle is that the tutelage of such people should be intrusted to advanced nations who, by reason of their resources, their experience, or their geographical position, can best undertake this responsibility, and that this tutelage should be exercised by them as mandatories on behalf of the league.

The character of the mandate must differ according to the stage of the development of the people, the geographical situation of the territory, its economic conditions, and other similar circumstances.

Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized, subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a mandatory power until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the mandatory power.

Other peoples, especially those of Central Africa, are at such a stage that the mandatory must be responsible for the administration of the territory, subject to conditions which will guarantee freedom of conscience or religion, subject only to the maintenance of public order and morals, the prohibition of abuses, such as the slave trade, the arms traffic, and the liquor traffic, and the prevention of the establishment of fortifications or military and naval bases, and of military training of the natives for other than police purposes and the defense of territory, and will also secure equal opportunities for the trade and commerce of other members of the league.

There are territories, such as Southwest Africa and certain of the South Pacific isles, which, owing to the sparseness of their population, or their small size, or their remoteness from the centers of civilization, or their geographical continuity to the mandatory State, and other circumstances, can be best administered under the laws of the mandatory State as integral portions thereof, subject to the safeguards above mentioned in the interests of indigenous population.

In every case of mandate the mandatory State shall render to the league an annual report in reference to the territory committed to its charge.

The degree of authority, control, or administration to be exercised by the mandatory State shall, if not previously agreed upon by the high contracting parties in each case, be explicitly defined by the executive council in a special act or charter.

The high contracting parties further agree to establish at the seat of the league a mandatory commission to receive and examine the annual reports of the mandatory powers, and to assist the league in insuring the observance of the terms of all mandates.

#### ARTICLE 20.

The high contracting parties will endeavor to secure and maintain fair and humane conditions of labor for men, women, and children, both in their own countries and in all countries to which their commercial and industrial relations extended; and to that end agree to establish as part of the organization of the league a permanent bureau of labor.

#### ARTICLE 21.

The high contracting parties agree that provision shall be made through the instrumentality of the league to secure and maintain freedom of transit and equitable treatment for the commerce of all States members of the league, having in mind, among other things, special arrangements with regard to the necessities of the regions devastated during the war of 1914-1918.

## ARTICLE 22.

The high contracting parties agree to place under the control of the league all international bureaus already established by general treaties if the parties to such treaties consent. Furthermore, they agree that all such international bureaus to be constituted in future shall be placed under the control of the league.

## ARTICLE 23.

The high contracting parties agree that every treaty or international engagement entered into hereafter by any State member of the league shall be forthwith registered with the secretary general and as soon as possible published by him, and that no such treaty or international engagement shall be binding until so registered.

## ARTICLE 24.

It shall be the right of the body of delegates from time to time to advise the reconsideration by State members of the league of treaties which have become inapplicable and of international conditions of which the continuance may endanger the peace of the world.

## ARTICLE 25.

The high contracting parties severally agree that the present covenant is accepted as abrogating all obligations inter se which are inconsistent with the terms thereof, and solemnly engage that they will not hereafter enter into any engagements inconsistent with the terms thereof. In case any of the powers signatories hereto or subsequently admitted to the league shall before becoming a party to this covenant have undertaken any obligations which are inconsistent with the terms of this covenant, it shall be the duty of such power to take immediate steps to procure its release from such obligations.

## ARTICLE 26.

Amendments to this covenant will take effect when ratified by the States whose representatives compose the executive council and by three-fourths of the States whose representatives compose the body of delegates.

## ADDRESS OF PRESIDENT WILSON.

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Mr. Chairman, I have the honor, and assume it a very great privilege, of reporting in the name of the commission constituted by this conference on the formulation of a plan for the league of nations. I am happy to say that it is a unanimous report, a unanimous report from the representatives of 14 nations—the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Belgium, Brazil, China, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Roumania, and Serbia.

I think it will be serviceable and interesting if I, with your permission, read the document as the only report we have to make.

(President Wilson then read the draft. When he reached article 15 and had read through the second paragraph, the President paused and said:)

I pause to point out that a misconception might arise in connection with one of the sentences I have just read—"if any party shall refuse to comply, the council shall propose measures necessary to give effect to the recommendations."

### PRESENTS HYPOTHETICAL CASE.

A case in point, a purely hypothetical case, is this: Suppose there is in the possession of a particular power a piece of territory or some other substantial thing in dispute, to which it is claimed that it is not entitled. Suppose that the matter is submitted to the executive council for recommendation as to the settlement of the dispute, diplomacy having failed, and suppose that the decision is in favor of the party which claims the subject matter of dispute as against the party which has the subject matter in dispute.

Then, if the party in possession of the subject matter in dispute merely sits still and does nothing, it has accepted the decision of the council, in the sense that it makes no resistance, but something must be done to see that it surrenders the subject matter in dispute.

In such a case, the only case contemplated, it is provided that the executive council may then consider what steps will be necessary to oblige the party against whom judgment has been given to comply with the decisions of the council.

(After having read article 19, President Wilson also stopped and said:)

Let me say that before being embodied in this document this was the subject matter of a very careful discussion by representatives of the five greater parties, and that their unanimous conclusion is the matter embodied in this article.



## NO SERIOUS DIFFERENCE IN MOTIVE.

(After having read the entire document, President Wilson continued as follows:)

It gives me pleasure to add to this formal reading of the result of our labors that the character of the discussion which occurred at the sittings of the commission was not only of the most constructive but of the most encouraging sort. It was obvious throughout our discussions that although there were subjects upon which there were individual differences of judgment with regard to the method by which our objects should be obtained there was practically at no point any serious differences of opinion or motive as to the objects which we were seeking.

Indeed, while these debates were not made the opportunity for the expression of enthusiasm and sentiments, I think the other members of the commission will agree with me that there was an undertone of high respect and of enthusiasm for the thing we were trying to do which was heartening throughout everything.

Because we felt that in a way this conference did entrust into us the expression of one of its highest and most important purposes, to see to it that the concord of the world in the future with regard to the objects of justice should not be subject to doubt or uncertainty; that the cooperation of the great body of nations should be assured in the maintenance of peace upon terms of honor and of international obligations.

The compulsion of that task was constantly upon us, and at no point was there shown the slightest desire to do anything but suggest the best means to accomplish that great object. There is very great significance, therefore, in the fact that the result was reached unanimously.

Fourteen nations were represented, among them all of those powers which for convenience we have called the great powers, and among the rest a representation of the greatest variety of circumstances and interests. So that I think we are justified in saying that the significance of the result, therefore, has the deepest of all meanings, the union of wills in a common purpose, a union of wills which can not be resisted and which, I dare say, no nation will run the risk of attempting to resist.

## TERMS DOCUMENT SIMPLE.

Now, as to the character of the document, while it has consumed some time to read this document, I think you will see at once that it is very simple, and in nothing so simple as in the structure which it suggests for a league of nations, a body of delegates, an executive council, and a permanent secretariat.

When it came to the question of determining the character of the representation in the body of delegates we were all aware of a feeling which is current throughout the world.

Inasmuch as I am stating it in the presence of the official representatives of the various governments here present, including myself, I may say that there is a universal feeling that the world can not rest satisfied with merely official guidance. There has reached us

through many channels the feeling that if the deliberating body of the league of nations was merely to be a body of officials representing the various governments, the peoples of the world would not be sure that some of the mistakes which preoccupied officials had admittedly made might not be repeated.

#### FOR VARIETY OF REPRESENTATION.

It was impossible to conceive a method or an assembly so large and various as to be really representative of the great body of the peoples of the world, because, as I roughly reckon it, we represent as we sit around this table more than twelve hundred million people.

You can not have a representative assembly of twelve hundred million people, but if you leave it to each Government to have, if it pleases, one or two or three representatives, though only with a single vote, it may vary its representation from time to time, not only, but it may (originate) the choice of its several representatives [wireless here unintelligible].

Therefore we thought that this was a proper and a very prudent concession to the practically universal opinion of plain men everywhere that they wanted the door left open to a variety of representation, instead of being confined to a single official body with which they could or might not find themselves in sympathy.

#### UNLIMITED RIGHTS OF DISCUSSION.

And you will notice that this body has unlimited rights of discussion. I mean of discussion of anything that falls within the field of international relations—and that it is especially agreed that war or international misunderstandings or anything that may lead to friction or trouble is everybody's business, because it may affect the peace of the world.

And in order to safeguard the popular power so far as we could of this representative body it is provided, you will notice, that when a subject is submitted it is not to arbitration but to discussion by the executive council; it can, upon the initiative of either of the parties to the dispute, be drawn out of the executive council on the larger form of the general body of delegates, because through this instrument we are depending primarily and chiefly upon one great force, and this is the moral force of the public opinion of the world—the pleasing and clarifying and compelling influences of publicity—so that intrigues can no longer have their coverts, so that designs that are sinister can at any time be drawn into the open, so that those things that are destroyed by the light may be promptly destroyed by the overwhelming light of the universal expression of the condemnation of the world.

#### ARMED FORCE IN BACKGROUND.

Armed force is in the background in this program, but it is in the background, and if the moral force of the world will not suffice the physical force of the world shall. But that is the last resort, because this is intended as a constitution of peace, not as a league of war.

## DOCUMENT IS ADAPTABLE.

The simplicity of the document seems to me to be one of its chief virtues, because, speaking for myself, I was unable to see the variety of circumstances with which this league would have to deal. I was unable, therefore, to plan all the machinery that might be necessary to meet the differing and unexpected contingencies. Therefore I should say of this document that it is not a strait-jacket but a vehicle of life.

A living thing is born, and we must see to it what clothes we put on it. It is not a vehicle of power, but a vehicle in which power may be varied at the discretion of those who exercise it and in accordance with the changing circumstances of the time. And yet, while it is elastic, while it is general in its terms, it is definite in the one thing that we were called upon to make definite.

It is a definite guaranty of peace. It is a definite guaranty by word against aggression. It is a definite guaranty against the things which have just come near bringing the whole structure of civilization into ruin.

## PURPOSES NOT VAGUE.

Its purposes do not for a moment lie vague. Its purposes are declared, and its powers are unmistakable. It is not in contemplation that this should be merely a league to secure the peace of the world. It is a league which can be used for cooperation in any international matter.

That is the significance of the provision introduced concerning labor. There are many ameliorations of labor conditions which can be effected by conference and discussion. I anticipate that there will be a very great usefulness in the bureau of labor which it is contemplated shall be set up by the league.

Men and women and children who work have been in the background through long ages and sometimes seemed to be forgotten, while governments have had their watchful and suspicious eyes upon the maneuvers of one another, while the thought of statesmen has been about structural action and the larger transactions of commerce and of finance.

## LABOR AN INTERNATIONAL QUESTION.

Now, if I may believe the picture which I see, there comes into the foreground the great body of the laboring people of the world, the men and women and children upon whom the great burden of sustaining the world must from day to day fall, whether we wish it to do so or not; people who go to bed tired and wake up without the stimulation of lively hope. These people will be drawn into the field of international consultation and help, and will be among the wards of the combined governments of the world. This is, I take leave to say, a very great step in advance in the mere conception of that.

Then, as you will notice, there is an imperative article concerning the publicity of all international agreements. Henceforth no member of the league can call any agreement valid which it has not

registered with the secretary general, in whose office, of course, it will be subject to the examination of any body representing a member of the league. And the duty is laid upon the secretary general to earliest possible time.

## FOR PUBLICITY OF TREATIES.

I suppose most persons who have not been conversant with the business of foreign affairs do not realize how many hundreds of these agreements are made in a single year, and how difficult it might be to publish the more unimportant of them immediately. How uninteresting it would be to most of the world to publish them immediately, but even they must be published just as soon as it is possible for the secretary general to publish them.

There has been no greater advance than this, gentlemen. If you look back upon the history of the world you will see how helpless peoples have too often been a prey to powers that had no conscience in the matter. It has been one of the many distressing revelations of recent years that the great power which has just been, happily, defeated put intolerable burdens and injustices upon the helpless people of some of the colonies which it annexed to itself, that its interest was rather their extermination than their development; that the desire was to possess their land for European purposes, and not to enjoy their confidence in order that mankind might be lifted in these places to the next higher level.

## GERMANY TO LOSE COLONIES.

Now, the world, expressing its conscience in law, says there is an end of that, that our consciences shall be settled to this thing. States will be picked out which have already shown that they can exercise a conscience in this matter, and under their tutelage the helpless peoples of the world will come into a new light and into a new hope.

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